

Message Text

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SUBJ: JAYEWARDENE'S SPEECH IN AUSTRALIA COMMONWEALTH MEETING:
SRI LANKA'S FOREIGN POLICY - THE SEARCH FOR RESOURCES

1. PRESIDENT JAYEWARDENE'S SPEECH MADE TO THE REGIONAL COMMONWEALTH MEETING IN SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA, WAS GIVEN WIDE PRESS PLAY HERE. WE WERE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN THE SPEECH BECAUSE IT IS JAYEWARDENE'S FIRST STATEMENT ON FOREIGN POLICY. IT CONTAINS NO STARTLING INITIATIVES NOR SIGNALS OF CHANGE IN SRI LANKA'S FOREIGN POLICY, BUT IT REFLECTS WHAT WE HAVE FELT SINCE THE GOVERNMENT CAME INTO POWER LAST JULY - JAYEWARDENE'S PREOCCUPATION IS WITH ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, AND FOREIGN
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POLICY IS DESIGNED TO SERVE THE CENTRAL PURPOSE OF HELPING TO COPE WITH THEM AND GET DEVELOPMENT MOVING. AS HE NOTED, ONE OF THE GREATEST THREATS TO THE STABILITY OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT IS A LACK OF RESOURCES AND STALLED DEVELOPMENT.

2. ON TOTAL DISARMAMENT: HIS STATEMENT CALLING FOR PEACE AND DISARMAMENT IS CONSISTENT WITH HIS "GENUINE" NON-ALIGNMENT

AND WITH HIS BUDDHIST PREFERENCE FOR A DHARMISTA (RIGHTEOUS) SOVIET. IT IS OF COURSE EASY, WHEN DETACHED FROM THE FRAY IN A "GENUINE" NON-ALIGNED POSITION, TO COMMEND ON PUBLIC OCCASIONS TOTAL NATIONAL DISARMAMENT AND TO CALL FOR A UN CONTROLLED SUPER-AUTHORITY. IN THIS CULTURE - AS IN MANY OTHERS NEARER HOME - IT IS OFTEN THOUGHT OF GREATER MERIT TO FALL SHORT OF A GRAND OBJECTIVE THAT ALL KNOW CANNOT BE REALIZED THAN TO FAIL TO ACHIEVE A MORE PRAGMATIC GOAL THAT PEOPLE MIGHT THINK WITHIN REACH. BUT HE IS ALSO A PRAGMATIST. HIS PLEA FOR THE CONTROL OF THE ARMS TRAFFIC SUGGESTS HIS INTEREST IN PRESIDENT CARTER'S EFFORTS TO CONTAIN THE FLOW OF CONVENTIONAL AND SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS. URGING TOTAL DISARMAMENT IN ORDER TO RELEASE RESOURCES FOR CONSTRUCTIVE PURPOSES IN THE DEVELOPED COUNTRIES AND TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT AMONG THE LDC'S IS A NOT SO SUBTLE REMINDER TO THE INDUSTRIALIZED OF THE RESOURCES THEY PRESENTLY "INVEST" IN ARMS COMPETITION BY COMPARISON TO THE MODEST FLOW OF DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES TO WHAT ARE SEEN BY HIM AS THE HARD-PRESSED POOR PEOPLES OF SOUTH ASIA.

3. COLOMBO PLAN AND DEBT SERVICING: HIS STATED PREFERENCE FOR COLOMBO PLAN ASSISTANCE "WITHOUT STRINGS" IS A REMINDER TO THE FOLKS BACK HOME THAT HE WAS ONE OF THE CO-FOUNDERS (WITH MENZIES OF AUSTRALIA, THE HOST COUNTRY) OF THE COLOMBO PLAN AND THAT WHILE THE GSL IS ACTIVELY SEEKING FOREIGN ASSISTANCE, IT IS NOT ABOUT TO ALLOW THOSE WHO MAY PROVIDE THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GSL WITH AID TO TIE THE GSL TO THEIR POLICIES OR THEIR QUARRELS. THIS YEAR'S DEBT SERVICE OBLIGATIONS IN FACT ARE PROPORTIONATELY LESS THAN USUAL DUE TO A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN EXPORT EARNINGS. BUT HIS CONCERN OVER THE BURDENS OF DEBT SERVICING IS REAL ENOUGH SINCE IF PLANS FOR GETTING THE ECONOMY GOING ARE REALIZED, SRI LANKA'S REPAYMENT OBLIGATIONS WILL BE SUBSTANTIALLY GREATER THAN EVER BEFORE UNLESS SOME NEW DEVICES EMERGE.

4. TIED AID: TO THOSE IN THE KNOWN, HIS CRITICISM OF TIED AID REFLECTS MAINLY WIDESPREAD RESENTMENT PARTICULARLY AGAINST EASTERN EUROPEAN AND RUSSIAN PATTERNS OF AID, WHICH HAVE BEEN NOTABLY INFLEXIBLE, HAVE PRODUCED A NUMBER OF UNECONOMIC AND OBSOLESCEENT INDUSTRIES AND IMPORTED EQUIPMENT THAT IS SOON UNUSABLE BECAUSE THE ORIGINAL IMPORTS WERE FAULTY OR INAPPROPRIATE AND FOLLOW-ON SPARES HAVE BEEN LONG DELAYED OR UNOBTAINABLE ALTOGETHER. BUT THEY ALSO ARE ACUTELY AWARE OF HOW OFTEN WESTERN DONORS, TOO, RESPOND ON THE BASIS OF WHAT IS CONVENIENT TO THE DONORS AND NOT WHAT ARE THE DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF THE RECIPIENT.

5. HIS STATEMENTS ON THESE SUBJECTS ARE THE MOST ORDERLY AND

STRONGEST HE HAS MADE. THEY SUGGEST A CLEAR SENSE OF SRI LANKA'S GENERALLY A-POLITICAL INTERNATIONAL POSTURE, AS COMPARED WITH THAT OF HIS PREDECESSOR'S, AND A LUCID SENSE OF WHERE SRI LANKA'S ECONOMIC INTERESTS LIE. THEY ALSO UNDERLINE HIS GOVERNMENT'S CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO THE COLOMBO PLAN, HOWEVER DUBIOUS IT MAY SEEM TO THOSE OF US RESPONSIBLE FOR BILATERAL AID FLOWS.

WRIGGINS

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